

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

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AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMCONSUL MADRAS

CINCPAC

USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 10956

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, UR

SUBJECT: FOURTH ANNIVERSARY OF INDO-SOVIET TREATY

REF: NEW DELHI 10289

SUMMARY: THE INDO-SOVIET TREATY ANNIVERSARY RECEIVED MORE ATTENTION HERE THAN LAST YEAR, MOST OF IT FAVORABLE. FOREIGN MINISTER CHAVAN AND CONGRESS PRESIDENT BAROOAH ATTENDED THE ISCUS CELEBRATION AND THE PRIME MINISTER RELEASED A MESSAGE EXPRESSING "HIGH APPRECIATION" OF SOVIET GOOD WILL. THE INDIAN EXPRESS OFFERED SOME ACERBIC COMMENTS ON SOVIET AID AS ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE OCCASION. END SUMMARY.

1. INDIAN PUBLIC FIGURES PAID SOMEWHAT MORE ATTENTION TO THE
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FOURTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INDO-SOVIET TREATY AUGUST 9 THAN A YEAR

EARLIER. THE MOST PROMINENT PARTICIPANTS AT THE DELHI MEETING OF THE INDO-SOVIET CULTURAL SOCIETY (ISCUS) WERE FOREIGN MINISTER CHAVAN AND CONGRESS PARTY PRESIDENT BAROOAH, BOTH OF WHOM ALSO GRANTED INTERVIEWS TO SOVIET CORRESPONDENTS. WHILE CHAVAN'S POSITIVE COMMENTS ABOUT THE TREATY AT THE ISCUS MEETING WERE PREDICTABLE HE ALSO USED THE OCCASION TO EXPRESS APPRECIATION TO NON-ALIGNED AND SOCIALIST COUNTRIES FOR THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF INDIA'S CURRENT SITUATION. CHAVAN DECLARED THAT INDIA MUST NOW "REBUFF EFFECTIVELY AND FOR ONCE AND ALL THE DANGEROUS MACHINATIONS OF REACTIONARY FORCES...." CONGRESS LEADER BAROOAH - GIVEN AS HE IS TO FLIGHTS OF RHETORIC - DESCRIBED THE EMERGENCY TO THE ISCUS AUDIENCE AS "A MIRACLE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY," AND IN AN INTERVIEW WITH A SOVIET JOURNALIST LAUDED THE INDO-SOVIET PACT AS "A BLOW TO THE EXTENSION OF THE DOMINATION OF NEO-COLONIAL FORCES IN THE REGION." NEITHER THE FOREIGN MINISTER NOR THE CONGRESS PARTY HEAD SHOWED UP AT LAST YEAR'S ISCUS CELEBRATION ALTHOUGH THE DEFENSE MINISTER ATTENDED.

2. THE GOI RELEASED A MESSAGE SIGNED BY MRS. GANDHI ON THE EVE OF THE ANNIVERSARY BUT LEFT UNSAID FOR WHOM IT WAS ACTUALLY INTENDED. IN THE ABSENCE OF A SPECIFIC ADDRESSEE TASS AND THE SOVIET EMBASSY TREATED IT AS A MESSAGE OF GREETINGS TO THE ISCUS. MRS. GANDHI'S MESSAGE WAS ROUTINE IN CONTENT AND INCLUDED HER "GREETINGS AND GOOD WISHES" TO THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF "INDIA'S HIGH APPRECIATION OF THEIR GOODWILL." LAST YEAR MRS. GANDHI SENT A MESSAGE TO ISCUS AND GRANTED AN INTERVIEW TO A TASS CORRESPONDENT IN WHICH SHE PRAISED GENERAL-SECRETARY BREZHNEV FOR HIS DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF INDIA'S PROBLEMS. (NEW DELHI 10745, AUGUST 13, 1974 NOTAL). TO OUR KNOWLEDGE THE PRIME MINISTER GRANTED NO INTERVIEW TO A SOVIET CORRESPONDENT THIS YEAR AND SHE MADE NO MENTION OF THE GENERAL-SECRETARY IN HER MESSAGE. COMMENT: IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO SEE WHETHER THE PRIME MINISTER ACKNOWLEDGES IN SOME WAY THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP'S FRONT PAGE AUGUST 9 MESSAGE IN PRAVDA, WHICH HAS BEEN INTERPRETED BY SEVERAL PAPERS HERE AS FURTHER EVIDENCE OF SOVIET SYMPATHY FOR THE GOI AT THIS TIME. SOVIET LEADERS ADDRESSED THEIR MESSAGE IN 1974 TO ISCUS PRESIDENT K.P.S. MENON, THE FORMER INDIAN AMBASSADOR IN MOSCOW.

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3. ON THE DISAPPOINTING SIDE FOR THE SOVIETS, SEVERAL DELHI DAILIES IGNORED THE ANNIVERSARY ALTOGETHER AND THE INDIAN EXPRESS CARRIED A LEAD EDITORIAL CRITIZING THE USSR'S AID PERFORMANCE. TAKING AS ITS CUE A RECENT, SELF-SERVING PRESS BRIEFING CONDUCTED IN DELHI BY THE SOVIET ECONOMIC COUNSELOR (THE EXPRESS COMMENTED ACIDLY THAT "IT IS FAR BETTER AND GRACEFUL TO LET THE RECIPIENT COUNTRY TO MAKE ITS OWN ASSESSMENTS...."), THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DAILY OBSERVED BOTH THAT "THE COMPOSITION AND

QUALITY OF SOVIET AID OFFERS DO NOT ALWAYS MATCH THE REQUIREMENTS" AND THAT THE "ABSORPTIVE CAPACITY OF INDIA FOR SOVIET ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL AID HAS PERCEPTIBLY SHRUNK." THE EXPRESS THEN QUESTIONED WHY SOVIET PERSONNEL SHOULD STILL BE CONSIDERED NECESSARY FOR OPERATING SOVIET-AIDED PLANTS AND PROJECTS "EVEN AFTER A DECADE AND MORE" OF THEIR COMPLETION, WHY INDIAN DESIGN AND ENGINEERING SERVICES SHOULD HAVE TO SURRENDER THE ROLE OF PRIME CONSULTANTS TO SOVIET ORGANIZATIONS IN ORDER TO QUALIFY FOR SOVIET CREDITS AT BHILAI, BOKARO OR OTHER PROJECTS, OR WHY THERE HAS NOT BEEN SMOOTH, FAST PROGRESS IN EXPLORING SOPHISTICATED AREAS FOR COOPERATION AND TECHNICAL COLLABORATION WITH THE SOVIETS WHEN IT IS CLEAR THAT THEIR HEAVY PLANT AND EQUIPMENT SUPPLIES ARE NO LONGER APPROPRIATE. THE CPI DAILY PATRIOT MORE DELICATELY ACKNOWLEDGED IN ITS ANNIVERSARY COMMENTARY THAT INDIA IS IN FACT FACING NEW PROBLEMS WHICH "THE OLD PATTERN OF TRADE AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS (WITH THE SOVIETS) WILL FIND MORE AND MORE DIFFICULT TO SOLVE."

4. COMMENT: THE EXPRESS' CRITICISM HAS OF COURSE ADDED SIGNIFICANCE IN PRESENT CONDITIONS WHEN THE PRESS HAS BEEN EXPRESSLY ENJOINED AGAINST MAKING COMMENTS WHICH COULD AFFECT INDIA'S FOREIGN RELATIONS. IT SUGGESTS A GROWING REALIZATION AMONG OFFICIALS HERE THAT THE SOVIETS WILL HAVE TO ADAPT THEIR OWN AID POLICIES TO THE CHANGED FOCUS OF INDIAN ECONOMIC PRIORITIES IF THEY ARE TO CONTINUE REAPING GOOD WILL AND PROPAGANDA DIVIDENDS. (NEW DELHI 10289).
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